Resolving Conflicts

Conflicts : inevitable when you work with others

You can :

* Choose to ignore it
* Complain about it
* Blame someone for it
* Try to deal with it (hints and suggestions)
* Attempt to reach a resolution (negotiation or compromise)

Conflicts are not only bad since they can show different points of view or opinions

* **Important thing is to maintain a healthy balance of constructive difference of opinion, and avoid negative conflict that is destructive and disruptive**

A three-stage mediation process

1. Prepare for resolution
   * Acknowledge the conflict
     + Discuss it with other members
     + Make the team reckongnize there is an issue
     + Don’t ignore the first signs of conflict (tendancy)
   * Discuss the impact
     + It gives dynamic and performance ot the team
   * Agree to cooperative process
     + Everyone involved must cooperate to resolve the conflict
     + **Putting the team first**
     + It may involve setting aside your opinion or ideas for the time being
     + If someone wants to win more than resolving the conflict, **you may find yourself at a stalemate**
   * Agree to communicate
     + **Everyone must Keep communications open**
     + Talk about the issue
     + People involved need to discuss their strong feelings
     + Active listening is essential in order to understand where the other person is coming from
2. Understand the situation (once the team is ready to resolve the conflict)
   * Clarify positions
     + Each position needs to be clearly identified
     + Get through strong emotion and reveal the true nature of the problem
     + Helps to See facts more objectively and with less emotion
   * List facts, assumptions and **beliefs underlying each position**
     + Information used, **decision-making criteria**, processes employed
     + Analyse in smaller groups
     + Separate people who are in alliance
     + Bring additional information, analysis based on objective tools (Cost analysis, Force field analysis…)
     + Remain open rather than judge and criticize
     + Everyone needs **to feel heard and acknowledged**
   * **Convene back as a team**
     + After the group dialogue, each side is likely to be much closer to reaching agreement
     + When you separate alliances, **the fire of conflict can burn out quickly, and it is much easier to see the issue and facts laid bare**
3. Reach agreement

Now that all parties understand the others' positions, the team must decide what decision or course of action to take. With the facts and assumptions considered, it's easier to see the best of action and reach agreement

When conflict is resolved take time to celebrate and acknowledge the contributions everyone made toward reaching a solution. This can build team cohesion and confidence in their problem solving skills, and can help avert further conflict

Preventing conflicts

* Dealing with conflict immediately – avoid the temptation to ignore it.
* Being open – if people have issues, they need to be expressed immediately and not allowed to fester.
* Practicing clear communication – articulate thoughts and ideas clearly.
* Practicing active listening – paraphrasing, clarifying, questioning.
* Practicing identifying assumptions – asking yourself "why" on a regular basis.
* Not letting conflict get personal – stick to facts and issues, not personalities.
* Focusing on actionable solutions – don't belabor what can't be changed.
* Encouraging different points of view – insist on honest dialogue and expressing feelings.
* Not looking for blame – encourage ownership of the problem and solution.
* Demonstrating respect – if the situation escalates, take a break and wait for emotions to subside.
* Keeping team issues within the team – talking outside allows conflict to build and **fester**, without being dealt with directly.